

the ireland:iceland project presents

The Northern Lights Observatory Dossier







People say that what we're all seeking is a meaning for life. I don't think that's what we're really seeking. I think what we're seeking is an experience of being alive, so that our life experiences on the purely physical plane will have resonance within our own inner-most being and reality, so that we actually feel the rapture of being alive. That's what it's all finally about.

Sagt er að öll leitum við eftir tilgangi með lífinu. Ég tel okkur í raun ekki leita eftir tilgangi. Ég held við séum að leitast eftir upplifun þess að vera á lífi, svo að lífsreynsla okkar í efnisheiminum megi enduróma í okkar innstu tilveru og veruleika, þannig að við finnum sannarlega algleymi þess að vera til. Þegar upp er staðið er það kjarni málsins.

Joseph Campbell



The Northern Lights Observatory Dossier

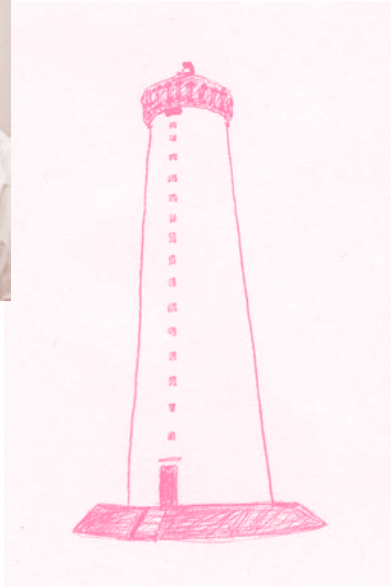
A manual on how to be a cultural investigator in exceptional times,
presented by the ireland:iceland project



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I believe that everything happens for a reason. People change so you can learn to let go, things go wrong so that you can appreciate them when they're right, you believe lies so that you will eventually learn to trust no one but yourself, and sometimes, good things fall apart, so better things can fall together. Jon Gnarr (above), quoting Marilyn Monroe, Dublin City Hall, Sunday 27 February 2011

Foreword

To organize is to sew, and sewing involves cutting and piecing, trying on and altering. It is a multi-part and multiple-person activity, so it means setting up shop – and in this, no other workshop carries with it the moniker 'sweat'. The organizers of the ireland:iceland project, Kathy Scott and Mari Kennedy, sourced from many parts of life's fabric to find their creative touchstones. And they possessed the indispensable element of placing trust in their intuition.

Let's pause here for a moment. The intuition of which I speak here is rooted in something known, but unlike the way intuition is commonly taken, Scott and Kennedy work to cultivate a deep and present consciousness of why they feel and think as they do. For them intuition also carries with it the need to communicate; it began as a communication of two. Their desire to bring it to another level was not so much about personally possessing more, but to locate a consciousness shared, and then to see if in collectivity, ideas might come together as a force.

A Skype from the sky came in March 2010 when Kathy and Mari made contact with me. They were following a thread of Buddhist practice that acknowledges ways of knowing only accessible to the keen and cultivated mind; this is a long thread that has been woven over time. Being practical, yet working without loss of the philosophical, they were seeking a dialogue about how to piece together a process over time that would become whole cloth – even though (we must admit with the sigh of searching) that the whole is never evident at the outset. The methodology they put forward – of comparing and contrasting, the inside and outside, of two like-but-different places – would follow something they sensed out of a love for the Irish and Icelandic landscapes and an awareness of our time. Personal motivation matters. It can propel us to greater insight. The process they sought to put into motion was to bring that to light.

As creative-doers, culture-makers, and art-enablers, we love when intuitions and images align. Those moments tell us something is right. So to seize upon the vision of lighthouses as residency sites and as studios seemed more than locational – it was ideal. Yet to have leapt to implement that idea as the first step would have been to have made a program out of whole cloth. It had to reemerge, tested and invested in by others, and become a step of collective realization.

Form-making takes time even if you end up, it seems, returning to the first idea. But in returning we can take up that initial thought in a stronger way. It is hard to wait, to give time to process, especially when the systems under which we work and have been trained tell us, 'get it done, now.' But this waiting is not about being a slacker. As we shifts in several sectors of contemporary culture, 'slow' can be a better, more sustainable, healthier modality. Undertaking process thoughtfully is about cultivating another frame of mind: to stay for a time in this open, non-judgmental mind-of don't-know (as Buddhists here call it). This takes all the attention we can bring to bear. So process not only takes time but also space. Opening up space can help us follow this necessarily non-linear path, as it spirals back on itself, gaining strength with each revolution. The task is to let the right answers reveal themselves through the process.¹

Process needs fuel to move forward in the right way and the 2011 Northern Lights Observatory event was good fuel. It provided a safe space to think openly, collectively. It was a way to share what we felt was unsettling about these times and probe potential to move forward. It started by positing: is co-creation really possible? And what would it look like, as well as afford, if enacted right now, this weekend, in this place, being together.

This work of co-creation is neither theoretical nor instructional. It cannot be fully determined before setting out; there is no fixed pattern for execution. So each step is provisional, requiring with it, reflection. Some steps can offer outcomes, becoming building blocks toward the next step and the final result. 'Awake: Art, Buddhism, and the Dimensions of Consciousness' was one such open research endeavors that I helped steer.²

What was accomplished was due to an implicit trust in the revelatory potential of unfolding processes. I hasten to add, the goal was neither to reach consensus nor to arrive at one outcome. Each participant in this several-year process found their own meaning and a resonance within the proceedings that enabled them to go forward in their own work and in a way that would not have been possible without this shared process.

The subjects such collective, investigative processes aim to tackle – be it Buddhism's relation to the art/life continuum or, in this instance, what it is to be truly alive in these exceptional times in Ireland and Iceland – are big. So the process must necessarily be wide. In launching such a process, my role has been to be there, to respond to echoes I heard in Kathy and Mari's investigation and that they heard in mine. More than advising, it was to affirm intuitions

and, as a prompt to action, to listen and feed back again those resonant thoughts and questions – maybe in a somewhat different way, so they could be heard anew.

To me, Kathy Scott and Mari Kennedy are curators. There is a need for curating that moves between sourcing and sewing, cutting or editing, in order to arrive at a form. Form-making is a process and curating is the method we use to arrive at the right form. Curating is also to take care (from the Latin *curare*) and to heal, and this happens at every step in a well-considered process. So this book is one aspect of taking care, a part of the process.

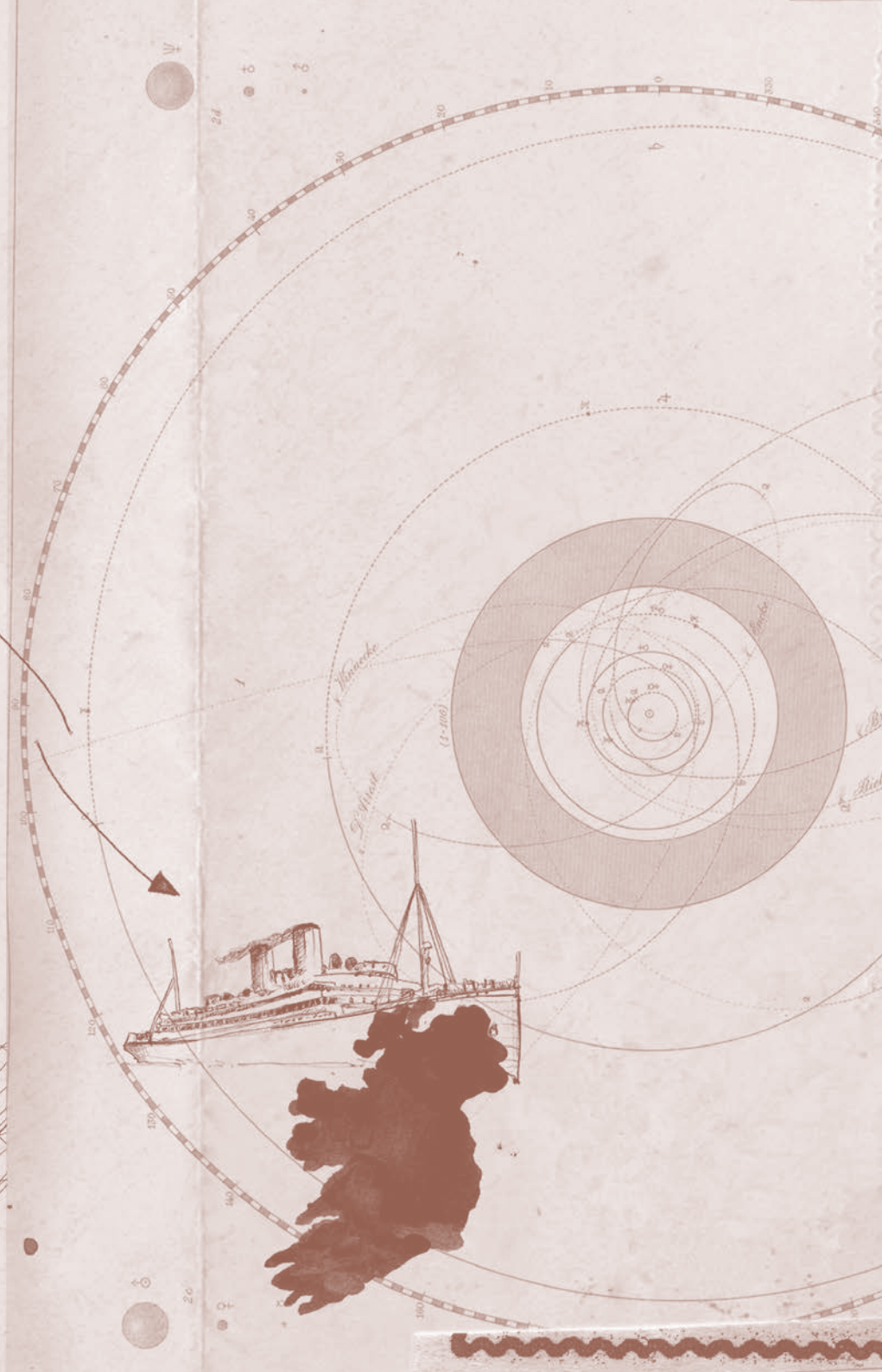
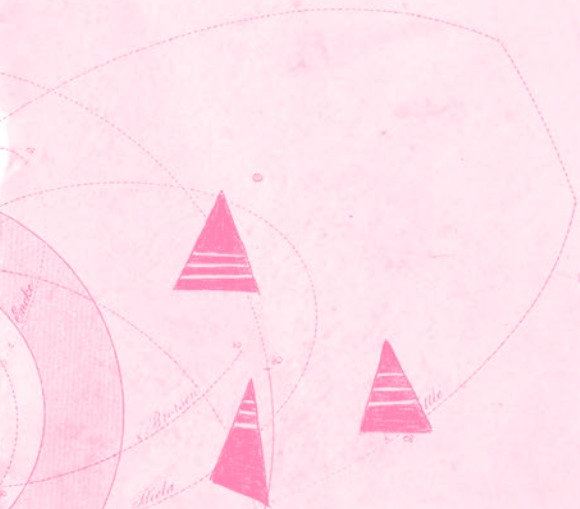
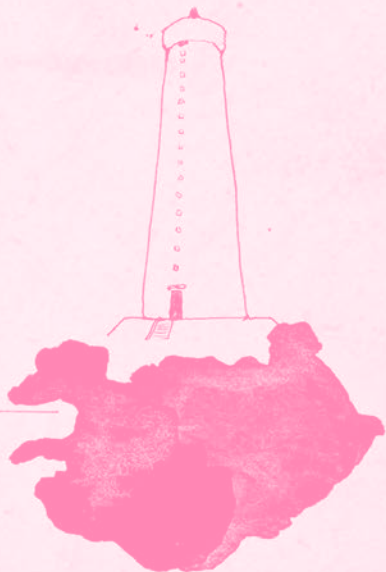
Mary Jane Jacob, mentor to the ireland:iceland project

¹The 'feel-good' criticism so often lodged at such open, experiential, and organic methods, only demonstrates (to my mind) that those critics and cynics are closed minded and lack experience in what such processes, when undertaken well, can really do. And while such emergent ways of working can bring about warm feelings associated of shared endeavor, these criticisms also display an unfamiliarity with the hard work and discomfort of unknowing, as well as the tensions that must be sustained and overcome for serious, positive ends to occur.

²From 1998 – 2004, with my collaborator Jacquelynn Baas, I undertook this program investigating the relation between the mind in meditation, the mind in creation (the artist), and the mind in re-creation (the viewer). At the beginning this proposal for an open, speculative research process was met with enthusiasm and belief from individuals coming from many quarters, but at the same time with suspicion and disbelief from others. After two rocky years, aligned with like-minded and committed co-investigators, we settled into a collective, shared space of exploration which took the form of by three-day convenings every three months over two years. For Baas and me, this lead to the book *Buddha Mind in Contemporary Art* (University of California Press, 2004); this volume was the way by which Kathy Scott and Mari Kennedy 'met' me. For the fifty others who sustained the process with us, this program contributed individually on a professional level, while at least some cases also personally, and significantly it was manifested in related public programs they undertook.



Being
Alive
Right
NOW





the ireland:iceland project

The stunning fall of Iceland late last year and the spreading contagion of the financial crisis have ignited fears – fanned by bloggers, analysts and a small group of outspoken economists – that Ireland, another small, open economy plagued by deficits and an outsize banking industry with incalculable losses, may suffer a similar fate.

The New York Times, March 2009

We are living in exceptional times that offer vast potential for cultural change on the interior and the exterior. the ireland:iceland project is a creative response to the times we live in from the perspective of two little islands that happen to begin with 'i'.

We are a cultural exchange project between Ireland and Iceland committed to mobilising creativity and exploring new ways of living, being and doing.

This is a collaborative experiment bringing artists, provocateurs and social investigators together to explore, share and communicate the experience of living beyond crisis, on the edge of a Brave New World. the ireland:iceland project places these two small islands at the heart of an investigative process in Europe as the systems and structures of the 20th century no longer serve us.

At the heart of the ireland:iceland project is a deep commitment to investigate our shared cultural situations past and present. The synergies between Ireland and Iceland have emerged, evolved and gathered momentum across time and space. We have started to trace some of these lines of potentiality and colour them in. In the midst of apparent chaos we have created a playground for serious play, a laboratory to experiment and explore creative responses. It was with this investigative spirit, on February 2011, that the ireland:iceland project conjured up the Northern Lights Observatory.

Let's start at the very beginning: the art of investigation

the ireland:iceland project emerged in early 2009 when cultural investigators Kathy Scott & Mari Kennedy wondered...

WHAT IF?

- we embark on a creative journey that can evolve culture through conversation, intervention and disruption.
- we bring together two islands that are experiencing cultural crisis/kreppa.
- we connect artists, cultural creatives and provocateurs from these two little islands to participate in the WHAT IF investigation
- we explore and activate the 'cracks of possibility' revealed in this convergence of crises.

The WHAT IF line of questioning evolved into a cultural movement connecting ideas people, social architects, lighthouse keepers, systems thinkers, economists, performance artists, music collectives, theatre makers, visual artists, filmmakers, writers, choreographers, designers, animators, change agents, DIY activists, movers and shapers...all threaded together by a shared, deep care for our collective future.

Pop up salons of cultural investigation

Throughout 2009 and 2010 we hosted salons in Dublin & Reykjavik inviting artists, provocateurs and pioneers to participate in the WHAT IF enquiry as an expanded community of 'we'. We were witnessing a seismic shift in our world, a new set of challenges and a new set of opportunities. Our small countries had experienced a dramatic roller coaster of expansion and contraction resulting in a climate of fear and uncertainty. We wanted to investigate the complexity of being alive on the edge of this Brave New World.

'Viltu vera memm?' (Do you wanna hang out with me?)

In November 2010 The Collaboration Agency (Scotland) and the ireland:iceland project joined forces to present a weekend-long pop-up Collaboratory 'The Art of Collaboration' in four venues around 101, Reykjavik. Promoting both projects, sharing and making mutually beneficial connections, and focusing minds on the potential for creative collaboration. It harnessed many Icelandic provocateurs to the ireland:iceland project from the Ministry of Ideas to The Weird Girls and the wonderful Galtarviti Lighthouse custodians while also developing a deep association between Ireland and Scotland, opening up further potential and magic.

I think there are good reasons for suggesting that the modern age has ended. Today, many things indicate that we are going through a transitional period, when it seems that something is on the way out and something else is painfully being born. It is as if something were crumbling, decaying, and exhausting itself – while something else, still indistinct, were rising from the rubble. Vaclav Havel

Why Iceland?

The question we are always asked.

Popular legend has it that the first humans to tread the shores and volcanic terrain of Iceland were monks from the North West of Ireland. Both Islands possess a particular psyche and a creative resilient spirit.

Our experience of massive economic expansion followed by balloon bursting collapse has been scarily similar, but our responses have been very different. This caught our attention!

Most of all however, we love the mystery and richness of the Irish and Icelandic landscapes - both interior and exterior.

The Northern Lights Observatory

The arrival of the IMF is a shameful time for Ireland which lies humiliated on the international stage.

The Guardian, November 2010

Following Ireland's spectacular fall from fiscal grace in November 2010, the ireland:iceland project developed into more than a creative conceit. We called together a group of creative collaborators from different sectors, disciplines and memes to birth a bigger gathering. We practiced WHAT IF as a collective. We began to test-drive new ways of working with each other and emergence. Those that bravely signed up for the adventure were: Chris Chapman, Angelique Cheronnet, Thomas Conway, Susan Coughlan, Silvia Guglielmini, Mary Jane Jacob, Bjarni Snæbjörn Jónsson, Mari Kennedy, Laura Larkin, Margaret Lonergan, Ruth Meehan, Sheena O' Byrne, Susan Pettie, Kathy Scott and Deirdre Tunney.

The vision of The Northern Lights Observatory team

Our key vision was to practice collaboration throughout the process of design and implementation. By collaboration, we mean to:

- Host space that welcomes the messiness of life, co-creativity, openness, diversity, and generative disturbance
- Value process
- Surf the tensions between chaos and order
- Integrate our individual inquiries and support our collective wisdom to emerge

All the while keeping in mind the question: what are we learning about creativity, collaboration and leadership that will serve us well as we move forward?

1 big idea
 5 questions
 1 possee of provateurs
 2 islands
 4.6 hectares of courage
 18 kilometers of focus
 1,600 assorted cups of tea
 2 Mayors
 86 acres of vision
 353, 976 grains of rice
 6 kitchen alchemists
 14.7 cubic feet of dreams
 7 dozen beating hearts
 5 large cakes
 7 flip charts.
 8 Events
 7 Inspirational Icelanders
 5 barrels of poetic fire
 8 team members
 45 billion millilitres of creative juice
 17 wings and
 54,000 prayers
 70 investigators consisting of artists, designers, social architects, ideas people, policy makers, dancers, bankers, developers, pop stars, community workers, economists, academics, schemers, entrepreneurs, story tellers, film makers, technologists, lighthouse keepers, movers and shapers – people who care about the future
 300 marker pens and
 1 Dog

~~NO~~ → YES

Thursday 24 – Sunday 27 February 2011

The Northern Lights Observatory took place from February 24–27 2011, the same weekend the Irish people faced one of the most critical general elections of recent times. 1000+ Irish and Icelandic social architects, entrepreneurs and cultural creatives gathered for a series of interventions, talks, salons, expeditions, a weekend sleepover at Townley Hall, and a public Collaboratory at City Hall, Dublin.

A convoy of Icelandic investigators central to Iceland's cultural and creative (r)evolution arrived in Ireland to participate in the Northern Lights Observatory. Intrepid Icelanders included:

- Jon Gnarr, Mayor of Reykjavik and leader of the Best Party
- Einar Orn Benediktsson, Reykjavik's Chair of Culture
- Bjarni Snæbjörn Jónsson, Founder of Iceland's Anthill and National Assembly
- Kristin Gunnarsdóttir, Galtarviti Lighthouse
- Gujón Már Gujónsson, Ministry of Ideas
- Andri Snaer Magnason, writer, director and activist
- Haraldur Jonsson, The Icelandic Academy of the Arts, Reykjavik
- Benedikt Jónsson, The Icelandic Ambassador

Culture is what we assemble our identities from and so it also provides powerful points of coming together, often in uplifting shared experiences, especially perhaps in societies where ritual, religion and politics no longer provide that focus as once they did. Most of our culture is not kept in special cultural houses – museums, galleries, concert halls and cinemas. It is all around us like the air, grass, rain and language. Charles Leadbetter

Questions we asked

We came to the Northern Lights Observatory to inquire together.

We had 5 questions:

- What is really going on at the moment in Ireland and Iceland?
- What are the critical ingredients that will be needed for a transformative cultural movement to be ignited in Ireland?
- What are the cracks of possibilities in the present moment?
- What possibilities excite us the most?
- What are we learning about collaboration and leadership that will serve us going forward?



Out of clutter find simplicity. From discord find harmony; in the middle of difficulty lies opportunity. Albert Einstein

The Northern Lights Observatory itinerary February 2011

Thursday 24

18.00 Northern Lights @ Exchange Dublin

Friday 25

09.30 Meeting with Creative Dublin Alliance @ Dublin City Council
Present: Jon Gnarr, Einar Orn Benediktsson, Mary Jane Jacob, Kathy Scott and Mari Kennedy

10.15 Economic Development Unit Workshop @ Dublin City Council
'Ministry of Ideas – Exploration in Innovation.'
Speaker: Gudjon Mar Gudjonsson

10.40 Culture, Design and the City Space @ Dublin City Council
Speakers: Mary Jane Jacob, Kristin Gunnarsdóttir

11.00 Irish Internet Association @ Digital Hub
Speaker: Gudjon Mar Gudjonsson

12.15 Jon Gnarr meets Lord Mayor of Dublin Gerry Breen

13.00 Lunch hosted by Ambassador Benedikt Jonsson

16.00 Excursion to the Hill of Tara

18.00 Arrive Townley Hall for Northern Lights Sleepover

Saturday 26

09.00–21.00 Northern Lights Sleepover

Sunday 27

09.00–21.00 Northern Lights Sleepover Townley

13.00 The Northern Lights Collaboratory @ City Hall Dublin

Voices that emerged

Build on the groups and infrastructures already in place which represent our needs, views and ideals as a changing nation, create new communities of like minded people to support one another in the change we hope to make. Finally continue to keep talking, gathering, and working towards those ideals.

The invisible hand
is **you**.
You are part of
a movement.

A Festival of Mistakes: to celebrate "failure" and all the success it can bring.

Change-makers in Ireland
are teaming up to create
platforms for dialogue,
reflection and collaboration.

LEADERS SHOULD WORK FROM
A COLLECTIVE CONSCIENCE:
PATHOS, EMPATHY AND
COMPASSION.

It's time to shift focus
to becoming fully human

It's a time to practice collaboration,
to re-model the ways we communicate
and educate

Let's redefine concepts like
Sex Risk and Invention:
free them of old shackles

A new system based
on human values;
ENGAGEMENT and
CREATIVITY is waiting
to take shape.

**WE ARE ALL LEADERS.
NO MORE HEROES!**

The culture of Ireland is going through a sea
of change. The religious hold is weakened
and Ireland's ~~latent~~ latent spirituality
has ~~free~~ space to express itself.

We can become more
self-sufficient - **LOCALLY**

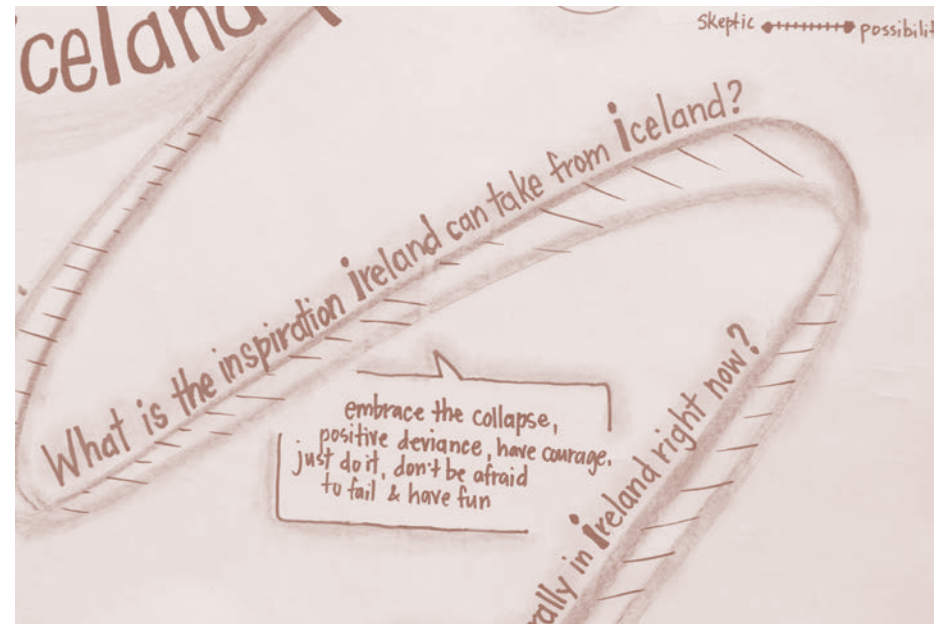
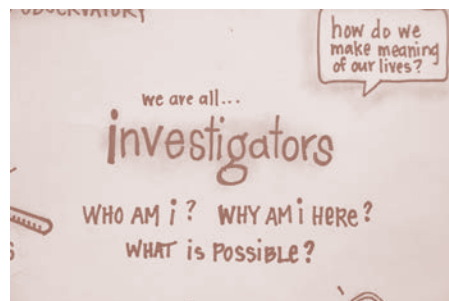
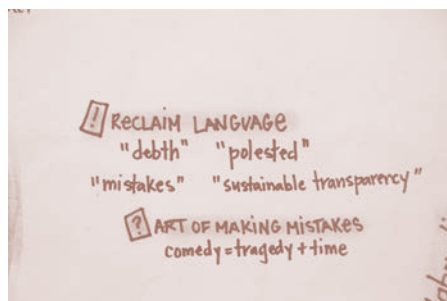
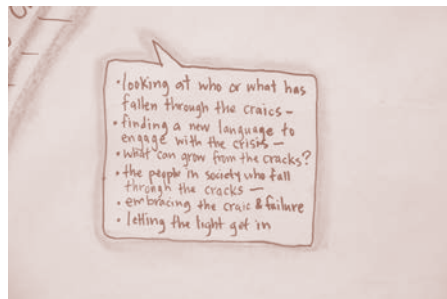
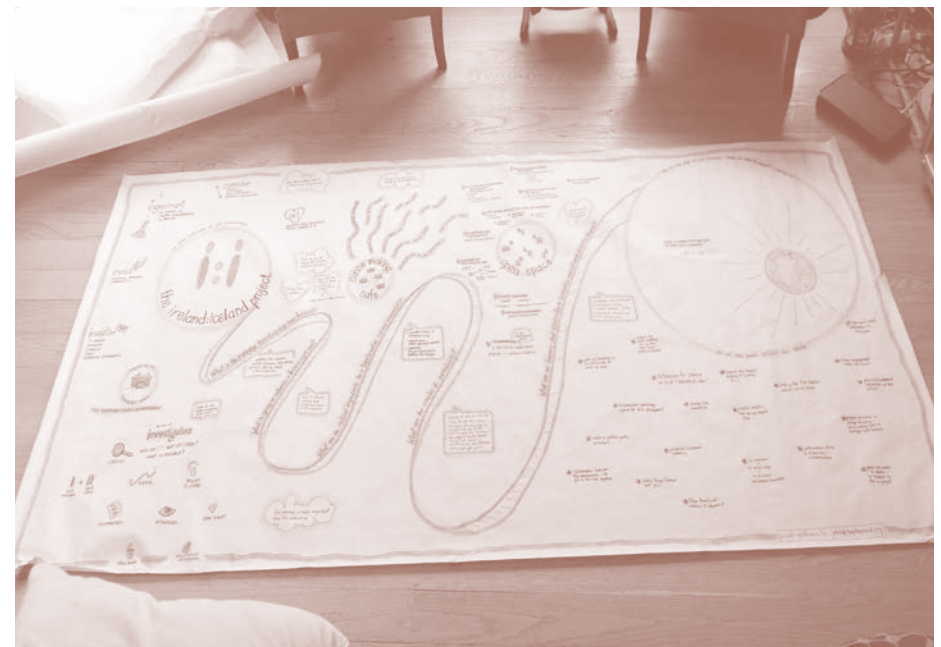
WE CAN SEE CRISIS AS CATALYST FOR CHANGE,
AN OPPORTUNITY TO MOVE BEYOND FEAR AND
FIND WAYS TO SURF BETWEEN STRUCTURE
AND THE UNKNOWN.

We can become more responsive as
individuals and a nation, develop
the willingness to ~~step~~ step up
and speak up when we sense
we are being misrepresented
by our government, and as by
the culture at large, no longer
abdicate ~~respons~~ responsibility
personally or collectively.

We have an opportunity to re-assess
our values. Our true richness is our
art, music, storytelling, beautiful
landscape and people.

You don't have to ~~be~~ be a politician to make
a difference. There are so many diverse,
creative and talented people who care enough
to want to collaborate together to take
action and make a difference to our
future together.

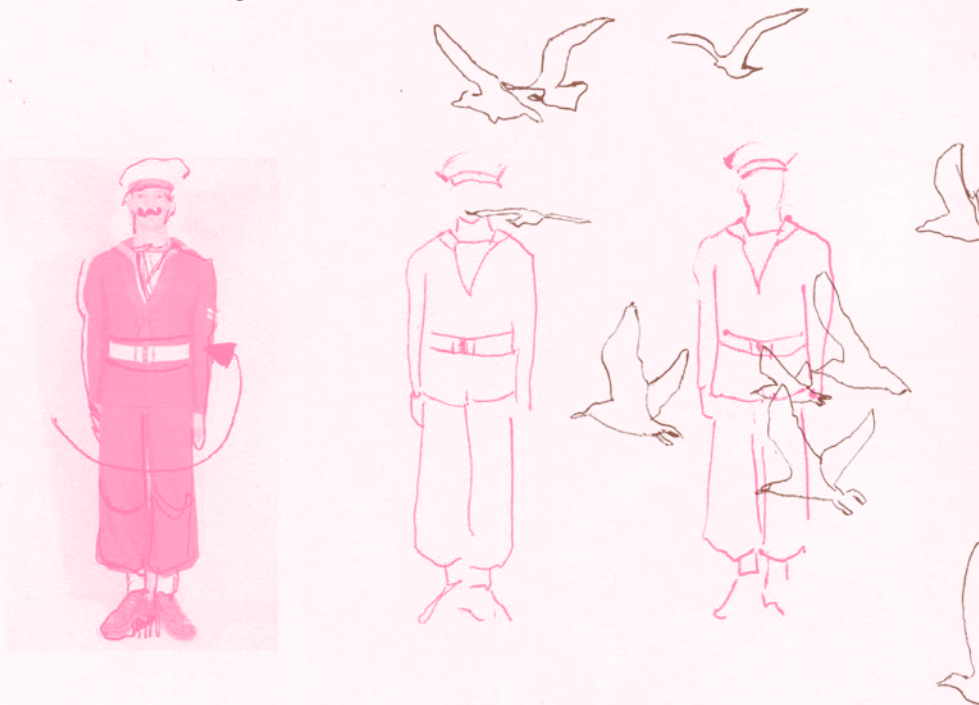
OUR RELATIONSHIP TO
AUTHORITY NEEDS TO CHANGE



Plan B

If the world would collapse for some reason I always thought of fleeing north to my grandfathers deserted farm and live off the land like he and my ancestors did for a thousand years but suddenly I realized that my toolbox only contained seven allen-keys that came with IKEA furniture and I knew that if the world would end and I made it north I would stand with these allen-keys amongst the swimming seals and the crying gulls and the growing grass and I would scream at the seals and the gulls and the grass and I would sink my teeth into the driftwood and die slowly.

Andri Snær Magnason



Notes from the edge

Reflections from some of The Northern Lights Observatory investigators

Susan Garde Pettie, Scotland

Since 2009 The Collaboration Agency has been developing collaboration within and between nations. Starting with the question 'What does it take to make nations as comfortable collaborating as they currently are competing?', we have been exploring the answer in Scotland and Iceland through promoting, coaching and facilitating collaboration.

Summer 2010: a synchronistic introduction to the ireland:iceland project expanded our horizons. That November working together on a 'pop-up Collaboratory' in Reykjavik allowed both projects to broaden reach and impact. This sharing of hearts, minds and connections led us to a greater understanding of our purpose.

Becoming more than the sum of our parts is a unique expansive human resource. Coordinating when we share information, cooperating when we also share resources. Collaboration happens when we add in our willingness to grow. Ready to be changed, we step back from individual control to collective trust and allow something far greater than us to emerge.

Inhabiting a space of presence and respect, honestly articulating, honouring the same in others, setting healthy boundaries, and staying curious to the 'greater than self' energy at play is a practice! This creative approach to life; flexible, curious, imaginative, challenging assumptions, persevering, resilient, divergent, playful, risk taking, is not just for the artist it is for all of us.

The vision of the The Northern Lights Observatory to 'spark a movement for cultural transformation' in Ireland contributed it's own unique flair and form to the myriad activities that are ongoing in the opportunity of financial crash.

Working with the i:i team in the design and delivery of the weekend's events was a gift – the struggle of grappling with huge ambitions, little resources and brand new relationships, the courage to step into the manifestation of a new future with all its associated messiness, the delight in achieving a connection, a commitment to action, an 'a-ha'! All these things and more pulled us into a vortex of

meaning making and new world building. The ireland:iceland project continues to contribute to that cultural transformation at home and abroad, shining a light on creative collaboration.

Bjarni Snæbjörn Jónsson, Iceland

Islands have natural boundaries surrounded by the sea. Island nations and communities form a strong sense of identity as a result of having an unbroken history of living in the island. Ethnocentrism and kinship are often strong elements in the culture, especially in times of trouble. Historically, in times of crisis, there has been nowhere to go. Sticking together was thus the way to deal with the crisis, be it of natural or human causes.

With the world becoming one global village, however, these cultural traits have faded with all the communication technology and ease of travelling back and forth. Still, there are evidences of psycho-social elements from the past, which point to the island culture as being different when it comes to crisis. The 'we-they' distinction comes to the surface and the community tends to stick together helping each other and form a strong opposition against perceived 'outer enemy' for better or for worse.

Iceland and Ireland have many things in common. The Icelandic sagas hold stories of Irish monks staying in Iceland before her settlements and there are many stories of people from Ireland coming to Iceland during her settlement period in the 8–10 century A.D. Furthermore, in more recent times the two nations have had similar political experience, being under a foreign rule, having to fight for independence and both being fairly young republics still learning their ways.

The opportunity to embark on a cultural journey with people from both these islands was therefore an exciting affair. With similar challenges in the present, having to learn from them to shape the fate of these nations, based on their past, there was a strong sense of kinship in the air and genuine sharing of stories, experience and insight which created something much larger than the sum of its parts.

This was unique event, never tried before, joining people with diverse backgrounds free of politicians and beaurocrats, from two nations in a joint effort to share and understand a vision for the future for each country based on similar identity and values at the core. The significance it the prospect of joining people from different places of the earth in realizing that what unites them in their values expressing basic human needs, from which ways can be found to cope in the best possible way despite natural differences of place and culture. Sharing experiences, empathy and ideas from a similar human core intelligences must be the way forward for a better world for all of us. That was clearly the message I took with me from Townley.

James O'Dea, United States

It has been said that without civilizations founded on dialogue we will continually lapse into raw aggression motivated by the fear of extinction/extermination and a primal instinct to dominate or be dominated. I have spent much of my life in dialogic practice focused on healing the wounds created by dominator worldviews. The root meaning of dialogue is dia, meaning through, logos, meaning higher mind – what we can recognize as the organizing intelligence of the universe. Dialogue, if it is true to this concept, draws us into a space where we can journey through the field of our own collective intelligence to source reliable wisdom. True dialogue is about the cultivation and harvesting of enduring wisdom.

The Townley Hall convening of the ireland:iceland project provided a rich sensorial context for authentic dialogue. It brought together a somewhat volatile mix of protagonists to create an atmosphere of creative encounter and multidisciplinary exchange. What stimulated my own sense of dialogic possibilities was this combination of seeding diversity, avoiding privileging one perspective over another and keeping an open field for creative emergence. I found that key knowledge and strategic ideas naturally rose to the surface and gained a kind of gravitational pull without being set up or imposed. To optimize this kind of effective process dialogue must harvest subtlety and complexity at the edge of chaos without falling into it and becoming incoherent. At this 'Collaboratory' there was a constant flow of content sharing and display which helped hold the gathering in a coherent meaning space – the gathering of honey for the meaning hive.

The matter in hand at this gathering was how to learn about cultural innovation and evolving best practice between two

small island nations – namely, Ireland and Iceland. Both nations succumbed to the seductions of the international gambling network of corporate banking and casino economics. There is a temptation to fall into blame (of which there is plenty to go around) or the flame-throwing fury of constant moral outrage directed towards those deemed responsible for the financial collapse in our countries and elsewhere. But that only takes us to a superficial analysis of what is a much deeper wound which strikes at the very heart of cultural inheritance and its deep streams of wisdom. The wound of blind materialism and its subjection of humanity to an inverted moral order have made greed, avarice and profiteering the highest goal of human striving – with some fake allegiance to contrary religious injunctions! When we understand that materialism robs us of our true gold, which is none other than a boundless generosity of spirit and true conviviality, we go for that gold and do not waste our time consumed by rage. Our ancestors taught us that true conviviality and ‘maintaining the hearth’ requires no calculated exchange of goods and services. Rather our sacred responsibility to each other requires cosmic belly laughs, hearty friendship, love, loyalty and a disposition that understands that poverty of spirit is a chronic inability to share and a deep loss of the magic of giving and receiving.

The Ireland-Iceland gathering at Townley Hall was both evolutionary and ancestral. We did not come to mourn the ignominy of our cultural loss or the global pillaging that reduces so many cultures to economic automatons but we came together to heal and remember our insatiable appetite for creative cultural resurrection. The gift of this gathering to me was that I remembered who I am and that I carry the treasure of a culture whose resonances dance with both the past and a very robust future. It tells me that even the smallest island nations may yet not only immunize themselves against empire they may help transform a world so ready to get over this long nightmare of sprawling, damaging and greedy self-interest.

What we learned

The process was difficult, beautiful, frustrating, uncertain, revelatory, creative, challenging. We encountered chiasmic gaps between what we aimed for in words and what we embodied in practice!

Post-Northern Light Observatory we realised that we were barely beginning to understand what it means to collaborate in an unknown space, and that collaboration is a potent and current learning journey for all of humanity. We simply chose to consciously test drive the learning via the ireland:iceland project.

This work is most definitely about loving the process/ journey and being flexible about the final product/destination. In a sense, the destination is what unfolds in each moment. Collaborators willing to be fuelled by the unknown need to REALLY be ok with detaching themselves from predetermined or desired outcomes. This tends to require a significant re-wiring of synapses and a willingness to let be... let go... and let come...

We see the ireland:iceland project as a creative frontier of social change – where people gather to investigate the future collectively, enabling creative collaboration. Working collaboratively and with emergence we aim to create safe spaces for rehearsal of new realities and go deep in transforming the way people experience the world. We like creating a critical mass of intellectual, cultural and social capital that can help us to look at the bigger picture. The seeds of The Northern Lights Observatory came out of this co-creative process and underlies how, we as a collective, communicate and work together. We want to continually refine and apply this process to all aspects of the ireland:iceland project including project decision-making, design, curatorial and leadership areas.

Everything has a value, provided it appears at the right place at the right time. It's a matter of recognizing that value, that quality, and then to transform it into something that can be used. If you come across something valuable and tuck it away in your metaphorical suitcase there's sure to come a moment when you can make use of it.

Jurgen Bey

The journey continues

The Northern Lights Observatory was our maiden voyage. This is what happened next....

May 2011: Mindfield

the ireland:iceland project curated and presented a DIY workshop 'Crisis/Kreppa – The Mother of Invention' at The Mindfield International Festival of Ideas with Valgeir Sigurðsson of Bedroom Community, Bjarni Snæbjörn Jónsson of Anthill Iceland, Smári McCarthy of International Modern Media Initiative Iceland, David Hayes of The Ministry of Ideas, Ireland. We also hosted a super special sonic affair with Valgeir Sigurðsson, Puzzle Muteson, Laura Sheeran, Trevor Knight and Linda Buckley.

July 2011: Galway Film Fleadh

the ireland:iceland project presented a series of inspirational Icelandic Films entitled Northern Light. Films included 'Gnarr', 'Dreamland' and 'The Future of Hope'. A discussion on 'The DIY response - how to be a catalyst in exceptional times?' involved Heida Helgadóttir, The Best Party; Noeline Kavanagh, Macnas, Sigvaldi J. Kárasón, GNARR; Gaukur Úlfarsson, GNARR; Davie Philips, Cultivate ; Caroline Erskine, We the Citizens; Thomas Conway, Druid Theatre; Mari Kennedy and Kathy Scott, the ireland:iceland project.

October 2011: The Office of Non-Compliance, Dublin Contemporary

the ireland:iceland project screened a pilot of The Northern Lights Observatory film at the inaugural TRAILBLAZE event at The Office of Non-Compliance, Dublin Contemporary. Many of the Northern Lights Observatory investigators were present and we had an opportunity to trace the many connections, satellite projects and interventions that had emerged from the ireland:iceland project.

January 2012: Crestone, Colorado

The first days of 2012 brought the ireland:iceland project to a very special place on the planet, Crestone, Colorado. We received a scholarship to attend an Emerging Leaders intensive lead by James O'Dea, international social healer and teacher and collaborated with

8 other emerging leaders the fields of peacebuilding, sacred activism and collective transformation. We experienced the potency of the 'we space' and tasted the possibility of leading from a new paradigm.

Truth Booth

Nestled into the The Northern Lights Observatory weekend's proceedings was the Truth Booth: a modern day (and guilt-free) confessional akin to a therapist's couch cultivating a creative, interactive documentation process on film. The Truth Booth idea came about as a response to the desire for radical honesty. Check it out on www.theirelandicelandproject.com

Lighthouse Expeditions

the ireland:iceland project are plotting retreat style environments for an eclectic group of Irish & Icelandic artists and ideas people, diverse in experience and practice. We began a pilgrimage to lighthouses on both islands in 2009 and are planning our first residency at Galtarviti lighthouse in Westfjords of Iceland in 2013.

The Trailblazery

Seeds for The Trailblazery were sown at The Northern Lights Observatory and it has become a social glue & dot joining enterprise connecting a large community of diverse boat rockers. The Trailblazery produce curious experiences that showcase inspiring ideas, people and possibilities alive in Ireland and the world right now – visit www.thetrailblazery.com

Pilgrimage Project – a cultural odyssey

This is a collaborative project co-curated by Kathy Scott and Aoife Flynn connecting a diverse group of Irish, Icelandic and Greek musicians, visual & performative artists. Pilgrimage Project is committed to excavating and decoding collective cultural identity drawing on mythology, folklore, pilgrimage, memory and the resilience of island spirit. Following the threads of the ancient Pilgrimage tradition, an experimental artistic collaboratory will be hosted in Sligo in May 2013 to explore the relationship and resonances between interior and exterior landscapes. Artists include Kate Ellis, Iarla O' Lionaird, Sean McErlaine, Linda Buckley, Donal Dineen, Myles O'Reilly, Noeline Kavanagh, Roisin Coyle, Andri Snær Magnason, Mikhail Karakis, Valgeir Sigurðsson of Bedroom Community Iceland.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Creative Touchstones

Buddha Mind in Contemporary Art: This book, conceived by Mary Jane Jacob and Jacquelyn Baas, simply changed our lives. The process, the approach, the truth and beauty offered by the contributors really moved us Bill Viola, Ann Hamilton Marina Abramović, Arthur Danto, Laurie Anderson, Zhang Huan, the list is endless. We were fascinated by the blurring of boundaries between art and life and how the artists view art as a way of life, a daily practice, in ways parallel to that of the Buddhist practitioner. It moved us to asked deeper questions about creativity & practice, process and perception. More importantly it moved us to email Mary Jane Jacob directly. Mary Jane is one of life's inspirational people and has become a mentor and friend. We are privileged beyond belief to have her on board the ireland:iceland project as our unofficial godmother.

James O'Dea: We came across James late one night down the rabbit hole (internet). Much like Alice in Wonderland we were instantly curious as his language of spiritual activism, social healing and evolutionary code breaking was right down our street. We made contact and invited him to Ireland to participate in The Northern Lights Observatory. He said YES! James is the lead faculty for the Shift Network's Peace Ambassador Training with hundreds of international participants. He is a well-known figure in international social healing who has conducted reconciliation dialogues for 15 years. He is on the extended faculty of the Institute of Noetic Sciences and its President. The former Washington office director of Amnesty International and CEO of the Seva Foundation, O'Dea is also a member of the Evolutionary Leaders Group.

Anusara Yoga: As two yogis our yoga practice offers us a discipline that guides us in all that we do. We both studied Anusara yoga which is grounded in a Tantric philosophy of intrinsic goodness and invites us at all times to flow with Grace. We hold those principles at the centre of the work we do.

Anthill Iceland: The Anthill is a grass roots collective of individuals from all walks of Icelandic society who came together to organise a National Assembly in 2010. The name Anthill refers to the fact that anthills have some sort of collective wisdom that each individual ant does not have. After two National Assembly's a Constitutional Council made up of 25 ordinary citizens with the assistance of the general public wrote a new constitution. In July, 2011, the Iceland parliament officially received the new constitution, comprised of 114 articles divided into 9 chapters.

Theory U: Theory U explores a whole new territory of scientific research and personal leadership. Otto Scharmer invites us to see the world in new ways – and to learn from the future as it emerges. It all hinges on our attention. 'If I attend this way, it emerges that way.' But what often keeps us from 'attending' is what Scharmer calls our blind spot – the inner place from which each of us operates. Unless we become aware of that blind spot – both as individuals and as communities and larger systems – we won't be able to successfully address the pressing issues and challenges of our time.

Integral Theory: Integral theory weaves together the significant insights from all the major human disciplines of knowledge, including the natural and social sciences as well as the arts and humanities. 'The word integral means comprehensive, inclusive, non-marginalizing, embracing. Integral approaches to any field attempt to be exactly that: to include as many perspectives, styles, and methodologies as possible within a coherent view of the topic. In a certain sense, integral approaches are 'meta-paradigms,' or ways to draw together an already existing number of separate paradigms into an interrelated network of approaches that are mutually enriching.' (Ken Wilber)

Spiral Dynamics™: A unique values-based model that charts the evolution and emergence of human nature a bio-psycho-social map of living human systems that focuses on natural designs and offers whole new integral solutions that are ecological, systemic, and life-affirming. Spiral Dynamics reveals the hidden codes that shape human nature, create global diversities, and drive evolutionary change.

Black Mountain: A source of inspiration The Black Mountain School was an arts college based on a strong sense of community, free inquiry, creativity, and the experimental spirit. It launched a remarkable number of the artists who spearheaded the avant-garde in the America of the 1960s. The concentrated sessions brought together as faculty and students many of the most talented musicians, dancers, painters, photographers, visual artists, thinkers and educators of the 20th century including Merce Cunningham, John Cage, Robert Rauschenberg, Cy Twombly, Willem de Kooning, Josef Albers, Clement Greenberg and Albert Einstein. The impact of Black Mountain College, through its experimental educational community and the people who made up that community, is still being discussed, debated and filtered through the hearts and minds of contemporary thinkers, educators and artists today.

Appendix 2: Glossary

Words we made up, borrowed, re-moulded, love – compiled for The Northern Lights Observatory investigators in February 2011.

Collaboratory: 'A centre without walls' (William Wulf) or 'A new networked organisational form that also includes social processes; collaboration techniques; formal and informal communication; and agreement on norms, principles, values, and rules'. (Derrick Cogburn)

Cultural Movement: A cultural movement is a group of people working together to advance certain cultural goals and a change in the way a number of different disciplines approach their work. This embodies all art forms, the sciences, and philosophies.

Culture: We are using a broad definition of culture: 'Culture is what we assemble our identities from and so it also provides powerful points of coming together, often in uplifting shared experiences, especially perhaps in societies where ritual, religion and politics no longer provide that focus as once they did. Most of our culture is not kept in special cultural houses – museums, galleries, concert halls and cinemas. It is all around us like the air, grass, rain and language.' (Charles Leadbeater)

Craic: Irish lingo for fun, frolics and general mischief. You can have craic, a person can be great craic, and the craic can be mighty. It is not related to crack cocaine.

CCP: The European Cultural Contact Point Ireland provides information, advice and technical assistance to anyone in Ireland interested in applying to the European Commission for funding under the Culture Programme 2007–2013. The CCP Ireland aims to facilitate the participation in the programme for the widest number of cultural professionals and operators as possible. They believe in the i:project. We like them.

Dublin City Council: Or DCC, as we are affectionately calling it at the i:i project, is the administrator for all services for Dublin city – business community, design, innovation, housing, water, roads, waste, planning, and now investigating cultural identity. DCC is being very supportive of the Northern Lights Observatory.

Digital Hub: The highly creative network of office pods where the i:i team live (and many creative industries), work, generate enough power to light a small village, network, collaborate and eat regular slices of toast with vegemite.

Documenters: These are the Investigators whose role it will be to listen and see with the eye of the heart at Townley and City Halls, and to document their observations using graphics, film and word. Findings will be available as transparent information, shared and used for project learning.

Galtarviti: Galtarviti is an abandoned lighthouse somewhere in the remote region of the Icelandic Westfjord. It can only be reached via a four-hour hike, or by boat, when the tide is right and has no internet or mobile phone connectivity. Galtarviti has provided inspiration for many of Iceland's musicians, most notably múm, who have on more than one occasion hauled their equipment across the water to record music there for their albums.

General Election: Our national state election where candidates for national government are voted in all constituencies. The Northern Lights Observatory is happening on the weekend of Ireland's most significant general election since the foundation of the state in 1921.

Irish Landmark Trust: People with beautiful lighthouses...and we like lighthouses.

Investigator: You.

Já Já: Lots of Icelanders say this a lot of the time. Seems to have many meanings: YES, HMMM, OF COURSE and other things.

Kreppa: In old Norse and modern Icelandic it is the noun for 'crisis'.

Morning Ireland: is the breakfast news programme broadcast by RTÉ Radio 1 in Ireland. It is noted as Ireland's most listened to radio programme. Broadcast each weekday morning between 07.00 and 09.00. Here you will fill your ears with Irish people discussing, berating, invoking, blessing, and attempts at plámásing.

Plámásing: From Irish word 'plámás' meaning soft-talking flattery.

NAMA: The National Assets Management Agency. It buys the assets of bankrupted property developers, taking them off the loan books of the banks and making the responsibility of the state for an indefinite period of time.

Salon: A temporary hub for creative brains to converge and swap body-mind pixels. We love these. If you have ideas for one, holler. Not to be confused with the wash, cut'n'blow dry sort.

Sleepover: A close relation to the salon except lasts longer and involves pajamas and a toothbrush.

Social Architect: According to Peter Block "The task of the social architect is to design and bring into being organisations that serve both the marketplace and the soul of the people who work within them. Where the architect designs physical space, the social architect designs social space." (Block, 2002, The Answer to How is Yes)

Spiral Dynamics: A theory of evolutionary stages of human development introduced in the 1996 book Spiral Dynamics by Don Beck and Christopher Cowan based on the work of Clare Graves. It helps explain why different people operate in different kinds of ways and respond to different types of messages.

Tara: It's a hill. If you're free, you're going to join us on an expedition there on Friday afternoon. It is the heart centre of Ireland, a sacred site associated with kingship rituals in Ireland until the 6th Century. We built a motorway through it during the Celtic Tiger years. Ahem.

Taoiseach: The Irish version of a Prime Minister. We're just not sure it's working out.

Townley: Shabby chic stately home in Slane, imbued with history and interesting architectural idiosyncrasies. This is where you'll be sleeping over. We think you're going to like it.

Theory U: is a model. It outlines processes by which transformative change happens and enables us to learn from the future as it emerges rather than only learning from the past.

the i:i project people: We are a small-ish group of activators who have been pulled to this project by one magnet or another. We share a willingness to step aside and let the collaborative magic happen – we are simply here to hold some space and shine some light, through processes of collective experimentation. We are simply a community of we.

Appendix 3: Townley investigators

Aisling Molony: Mediation guru, amazing listener, wild sense of humour, loyal, insightful and occasional chief bottle washer.

Alice Maher: One of Ireland's foremost contemporary artists. Has produced some of the most iconic images in Irish art working in sculpture, photography installation and drawing. Her work is embedded in cultural history, folklore, fairy tales and medieval history.

Alicia Falvey: Drama student, bright young thing She is into performance sculpture, environment, transition towns and clowning.

Ali Curran: Cultural mover & shaper, critical voice and cultural policy enthusiast. She has been at the helm of Dublin Fringe Festival and The Peacock Theatre and other cultural ships.

Angela Bourke: Academic, writer, storyteller, Irish oral historian, visiting professor at Harvard, author of The Burning of Bridget Cleary, connected to Ireland past and present.

Andri Snær Magnason: Perhaps Iceland's most celebrated young writer. His book 'Dreamland – a Self Help Manual for a Frightened Nation' is an inspiration to many and mobilized environmental awareness internationally. Dreamland is now a feature length documentary film.

Ambassador Benedikt Jonsson: Visionary. Represents Iceland in the United Kingdom and Ireland. He studied in University College Dublin and speaks pretty impressive Irish in his spare time.

Ása Björk Ólafsdóttir: Rector in Kells. Studied fashion design in London & Helsinki, BA in Fine Arts, and made theatre costumes in Reykjavik. After artistic modeling and teaching troubled teenagers she found Theology. Came to Ireland in 201 and has three children.

Brian Cunningham: Galway property developer/ builder whose business collapsed post boom. Now in recovery and curious.

Brendan Dowling: Award-winning social entrepreneur, strong community voice, street trader. and storyteller.

Colm Hogan: Cinematographer extraordinaire. Refreshingly straight up. Sees life through a beautiful lens.

Clare Mulvany: Storyteller & community builder using writing, photography and creative events. Yogini. Baker of cakes. Cooking up adventures with Street Feast and The Trailblazery.

David Hayes: Highly motivated and passionate online community manager/social media strategist. David's background is rooted in the creative arts, online activism and sustainability.

David McWilliams: Economist, broadcaster, bestselling author and on the telly. Ireland's crash prophet and bigger picture seer. Came to Townley Hall with his dog and wonderful stories of love.

Davie Phillip: Eco-social entrepreneur, resilience pioneer, sometime chaos surfer at Cultivate, Transition Towns, Cloughjordan Eco-village in Co. Tipperary and beyond.

Darragh Doyle: Online Storyteller. Blogs, tweets, facebooks, tumbls, youtubes, foursquares and yelps. Helps businesses, charities, arts organisations and events get the word out online.

Dick Gleeson: A man of BIG ideas. Business mind, social heart. Dublin City Council. Inspired. Loves it when a plan comes together.

Dominic Campbell: Director of Bealtaine, Ireland's national celebration of creativity in older age. Programmed public discussions at The Abbey Theatre and artistic director to 2004's 'Day of Welcomes' & St Patrick's Festival. Sometimes he makes stuff. Sometimes he tries to make stuff happen. Inspired by Carnival.

Einar Orn Benediktsson: Former trumpet player with the Sugar Cubes and one of the founders of the Best party in Reykjavik which had a landslide victory in the 2010 municipal elections. Punk turned Reykjavik's Chair of Culture.

Fearghus O'Chonchuir: Independent choreographer and dance artist. Raised in the Ring Gaeltacht in Ireland. Degrees in English and European Literature at Magdalen College Oxford, before training at London Contemporary Dance School. Project Arts Centre catalyst. He's a warm-hearted, fast-footed cultural provocateur.

Guðjón Már Guðjónsson: Initiated the grassroots Ministry of Ideas – a forum for discussion and promotion of innovation in industry, education, economics, and society. In 2009 Guðjón was selected by the Junior Chamber International as one of the Ten Outstanding Young Persons of the World honor.

Haraldur Jonsson: Visual artist. Has expanded his activity into more immaterial fields and performative spaces. He is currently an adjunct at the Icelandic Academy of the Arts in Reykjavik. An oracle on all things Icelandic.

Helen Cleary: Banker with a heart, adventurer, straight talker and general all round up-for-it lady. Curious.

Hilary O'Shaughnessy: Actress, cultural provocateur and social gamer. Founder of Playgroup Theatre Company and Artistic Director of Make & Do. Likes adventures in games, art and life.

James O'Dea: Leader and inspirer, developer of global programmes in Social Healing, Restorative Justice, local and global conflict resolution, member of the Evolutionary Leaders group spearheaded by Deepak Chopra and an Irishman.

John Harrington: Director of RealEyes Sustainability Ltd providing training, facilitation and consultancy services to organizations interested in sustainability. Interested in the connection between ecological and economic collapse, plays guitar and is also a dad so learning loads.

Johnny Moran: Mediator, Social Entrepreneur, founder of Open Minds Yoga, deep listener on the pulse, man for all seasons, business man in the thick of it.

Jon Gnarr: A comedian and one of the founders of the Best Party of Reykjavik which had a landslide victory in the municipal elections 2010. Their campaign video featured the candidates singing to the tune of Tina Turner's 'Simply The Best' and their pledges included 'sustainable transparency', free towels at all swimming pools and a new polar bear for the city zoo. The highlight of their campaign came when Jon Gnarr declared that he would rise like Fhelix DaBird from the fire, or the moon, or the sun. Fhelix DaBird and Mr E are new in public office.

Joan Mulvihill: From Longford but that's not her fault, Head of Irish Internet Association, digital queen, politics enthusiast, total people connector.

Julie Gieseke – Documenter: Graphic facilitator, visual co-creator, developer of academic offering in visual facilitation, traveler, Ireland enthusiast, visiting from San Francisco, meditator, curious co-enquirer, epicurean, coach & NLP master.

Keith Molony: Father, Entrepreneur, business leader, philosopher, founded a children's orphanage in Nepal, mythic tendencies.

Kristin Gunnarsdóttir: Fashion design degree at the Iceland Academy of the Arts. She also studied philosophy at the University of Iceland. She has move from Iceland Design to setting up a Festival of Mistakes. Our favourite Lighthouse keeper loves watching society moving at tremendous speed – observing it all from diverse perspectives.

Lara Campbell: Artist, actor, designer, maker, doer, yogi, sensational chef and they say if you look up craic in the dictionary she comes with her own page. Good time guaranteed.

Liz Burns: Curates and project manages collaborative arts projects that relate to community in context, based in Dublin in Firestation Artist's Studios, cultural leader, giver of time and advice.

Marina Levitina: From Russia with Love, Visionary, Amazing intellect and inspirational heart, wise, beautiful, cares about our future, always smiling.

Mary Nally: Connoisseur of all things Icelandic, fashionista, centre of attention, party-throwing queen with a penchant for Buckfast, living in a triangle of Galway, New York and Reykjavik.

Messiana Kristinsdóttir: London born, lived most of her life in Iceland, but now lives in wonderful Kells in Ireland. Her interests are Ballroom and Latin dancing, but her greatest passion is singing.

Michael McDermott: Cultural provocateur, on the edge, editor of Le Cool Dublin, music buff, wears excellent Icelandic jumpers.

Miriam O'Connell: Lover of all things creative, Kerry woman, facilitator, coach and change consultant.

Myles O'Reilly: Musician and camera pointer. The Bob Dylan documentary 'Don't look back' coupled with the entire Werner Herzog catalogue, inspired him want to point a camera for a living. Myles and Kathy met en route to Reykjavik.

Noeline Kavanagh: Queen of Macnas, Shaman, poetess, priestess, force of nature.

Nooreen McHugh: Wild Thing from the west of Ireland, BIG Heart, straight up & no messin' attitude, Domestic Goddess.

Orla Vaughan: Hails from Kilfenora but that's ok. Hostel owner, soccer aficionado, health & Fitness expert sometimes with a penchant for entertaining the masses

Peter Finnegan: Life saver, supporter of the i:i project, Head of Research & International Affairs at Dublin City Council, visionary, inspired and open.

Peter O'Brien: Mover and shaker, cultural connector, yogi in the park, makes things happen, Upstart instigator and good sounding board for the i:i project team.

Róise Goan: Cultural entrepreneur, connector, Dublin Fringe Festival conjuror, makes a difference, right here right now, up for it.

Samuel Bishop: Designer. Upstarter, Passionate about community & social justice. Pop-up park plotter. Street Feaster. Permaculturalist. Up to mischief.

Sarah Clancy: Poet and prophet. Worked with SpunOut.ie. Interested in social change movements worldwide. She has published one collection of poetry last year and a second on the way.

Shane Mulhall: Landlord at Townley Hall. School of Philosophy & Economics, philosopher, leadership aficionado.

Tanya McCrory: Choreographer, artist, listener, and deep thinker. Leads walking meditation, yogi and connector. She has done time at Plum Village. Lives somewhere between California and Galway in the west of Ireland.

Tom Stuart: part of the Exchange Dublin collective run entirely by young people and holding discussions, gigs, visual arts and performance. He moves and shakes.

Trevor Knight: Composer, living in Ireland since 1950s. In the late 1970's he formed Auto da Fé, an avant-garde pop group with a strong theatrical performance element. Trevor and Alice (Maher) have been known to collaborate in very amazing ways!

Victoria McCormack: Performance artist and arts practitioner. Deeply connected to process, practice and enquiry. Influenced by Mary Jane Jacob. She has been known to dress up and dance on tables. Full of grace.

Appendix 4: The Northern Lights Observatory collaborators

Alex, technical support/runner: Bright young thing with a keen interest in media, art and technology. And we suspect a penchant for philosophy.

Angelique Cheronnet, co-ordination: From Paris originally and in Ireland 5 years, producing and presenting an Art show on Dublin City radio, working on Dublin International Puppet Festival and Festival of World Cultures, while exploring her passion for photography.

Bjarni Snæbjörn Jónsson – Consultant/Mentor Management consultant and social entrepreneur. Into human systems emergence and natural design. Always fascinated by the potential of the sum of the whole as opposed to the sum of the parts and to experience the difference. A 'dialogue nerd' and a 'true believer of collective wisdom.'

Chris Chapman, facilitator: A Teacher and Process Artist, experienced conference facilitator and change agent. Works with some of the world's leading figures in the field of leadership development. Not afraid to mouth off about things he knows nothing about on the off chance he might occasionally make some sense.

Deirdre Tunney, deputy creative producer and documenter: Recently preoccupied with change, particularly the change that excavates and reconnects. She is a fan of those things that push boundaries, loves wild places and a good knees-up.

Laura Larkin, production manager: SUPER glue that held us together at the i:i project. She has tripped the light with Festival of World Cultures, St Patricks Festival and Arts Office Dun Laoghaire, Hard Working Class Heroes, Castlepalooza and Kaleidoscope Night.

Kathy Scott, curator & creative producer:

Part cultural investigator, part provocateur & part ireland:iceland obsessive, part art junkie, part nomad, part connector, part DIY and part yogi. She is hopefully more than the sum of all of these parts. Shape Shifter.

Margaret Lonergan, design consultant: Visual communication practitioner, photographer, writer, teacher, friend of the i:i project and Buddhist.

Mari Kennedy, curator and creative strategist:

Fascinated by how we organise ourselves as human beings. Inquirer, awakened heart and wisdom holder. Thrives in opening spaces where transformation happens. Strategist, event coordinator on the outside; mediator, singer and yogi on the inside!

Mary Jane Jacob, shadow curator/mentor:

Professor of Sculpture and Executive Director of Exhibitions at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, researcher and author into the nature of the art experience producing the anthology Buddha Mind in Contemporary Art, Learning Mind: Experience into Art and the upcoming Chicago Makes Modern: How Creative Minds Changed Society. Advisor, friend and critical voice since the beginning of the i:i project. Luminary and international thought leader on art in social contexts.

Ruth Meehan, documenter and film family:

makes diverse television, good coffee, bad jokes and hopes to make the world an altogether better place for being part of the i:i project. On the team to document the Truth Booth to capture fly on wall aspect of the Townley experience.

Silvia Gugliemini, co-ordinator and events manager:

Hails from Italy, with a background in Tourism. Silvia is now happy to be working on a project that is closely linked to her studies. Using her documentation, project development and administration skills at the i:i. Hates clutter and loves mushy peas.

Sheena O'Byrne, host: artist, maker, doer, driver, connector, supporter, sounding board, heart warmer and lots of other inspiring things. A very bright and shining light.

Susan Coughlan, creative consultant:

Consultant on organisation development with a history of work in arts & cultural arena. Loves being an evolutionary adventurer with the i:i project where she has dived into areas of communications, event design, coordination and collaboration. In a spirit of doing the opposite of what comes naturally, Susan attends clown school where she can play with paradox to her hearts content.

Susan Pettie, facilitator, Scottish collaboration partner:

Brazen faced catastrophe miscreant, social entrepreneur, passionate about the possibilities for a hyper creative peaceful and sustainable world born out of the liberation of everyone's creative expression, collaboration focused hokus pokus host.

Thomas Conway, shaper:

Literary manager with Druid since 2005, Thomas also works as a director, dramaturg, teacher and journalist. He is also an expert on Irish public transport, and in 2011 will be diversifying by providing consultations on such matters.

Appendix 5: Invitation to the Northern Lights Observatory

*** COLLABORATORY:** "a centre without walls" (Wulff 1989) "It is a new networked organisational form that also includes social processes, collaboration techniques, formal and informal communication; and agreement on norms, principles, values, and rules" (Logburn, 2003)

WHO'S COMING
The Mayor of Reykjavik and leader of the Best Party JON GNARE.
Reykjavik's Minister for Culture EINAR ÖRN BENEDIKTSSON.
BJARNI S. JONSSON one of the founders of Iceland's Anthill and National Assembly, KRISTIN GUNNAERSDÓTTIR of The Iceland Design Centre, GUÐJÓN MAR GUÐJÓNSSON of Ministry of Ideas and one of the founders of the Anthill. Writer, Director and activist ANDRÉI SNAER MAGNÁSSON and HARALDUR JÓNSSON of The Icelandic Academy of the Arts, Reykjavik and Ambassador Benedikt Jónsson who represents Iceland in the United Kingdom and Ireland.

WHAT TO BRING
Ideas; Notebook and Pencil; Sense of Curiosity; Open Heart; Open Mind; Chans, Codes and Signs.

OTHER SPECIAL EVENTS ON THE WEEKEND INCLUDE
• Meetings with senior management at Dublin City Council to share ideas and collaborate around culture, economy and creativity.
• A seminar at The Digital Hub with Guðjón Mar Guðjónsson of The Ministry of Ideas, Iceland.
• A sleepover at Townley Hall involving 30 Irish & Icelandic cultural investigators, including artists, social architects, ideas people, innovators, scientists, economists and philosophers - who meet first as people who care about the future and secondly as specialists in their field.

Dear investigator,
We would like you to be part of
The Northern Lights Observatory
a cultural experiment in exceptional times
Sunday Feb 27 at City Hall, Dublin
from 1pm to 5pm
This a public collaborative between*
Ireland and Iceland investigating our
cultural identity.
We will hear the Icelandic story. We will
explore the opportunities for changes, and
share the possibilities of an inspiring future
on these two islands right now.
See you there. Talk.
ireland · iceland x

HOW TO REGISTER
Open the PDF and click on this link:
www.eventelephant.com/theirelandicelandproject

IRELAND AND ICELAND have deep historical ties as well as significant points of reference in recent times that have gone relatively unmapped up to now. As two small islands experiencing acute challenges, there is enormous potential for inspiring Irish and Icelandic stakeholders to come together, learn from each other and explore possibilities for an emerging future.

THE NORTHERN LIGHTS OBSERVATORY
On the weekend of February 25 - 27, a group of inspirational Icelanders will land on Irish shores for The Northern Lights Observatory, the first major event of the ireland · iceland project.

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the ireland:iceland project partners

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Special thanks/takk

Adrian Crowley, Andrew Kavanagh & Anna Bujacz at Kavaleer, Anthony Murphy, Aoibheann McNamara, Bedroom Community, Brian O' Neill, Caoimhin O Raghallaigh, Ciara Higgins, Clare Mulvany, Damien Rice, David McWilliams, Digital Hub, Dominic Campbell, Edel Flynn, Eoin Tierney, Gavin Friday, Heiða Helgadóttir, Panchen Otrul Rimpoche & all at Jampa Ling, John Gore Grimes, Joan Mulvihill, John Fox, John Kelly, Kate Bowe, Kate Ellis, Katie Lowry, Lara Jonasdóttir, Laura Sheeran, Mary Nally, Myles O' Reilly & the Arbutus Yarns crew, Noeline Kavanagh, Nuno Sacramento, Oisín at The Sugar Club, Olafur Breidfjörð, Peter J Finnegan, Philip Flynn, Roisin Coyle, Sarah Tuck, Smári McCarthy, The Best Party, Thomas Conway, Victoria Tillotson

Images courtesy of Kathy Scott, Guðmundur Oddur Magnússon, Eimearjean McCormack, Andri Snær Magnason, Ruth Meehan, Clare Mulvany, Jon Gnarr, Victoria McCormack, Oonagh Kearney

The Northern Lights Observatory map by Roisin Coyle, p24–25
Mind-map by Julie Gieseke, p28–29

Design, illustration and collages by JP Hartnett and Amélie Bonhomme

Printing by Plus Print Ltd., Dublin



Dublin October 28th 2012

Every Journey needs a compass and the inspiration of Kathy Scott and Mari Kennedy has proven to be the compass that guided this journey. The Northern Lights Observatory called on participants to leave the shore of the familiar and comfortable and journey out into uncharted waters seeking and shaping new coastlines of possibilities. Truly a lighthouse with its calling, searching and warning beacon is an apt image adorning this publication.

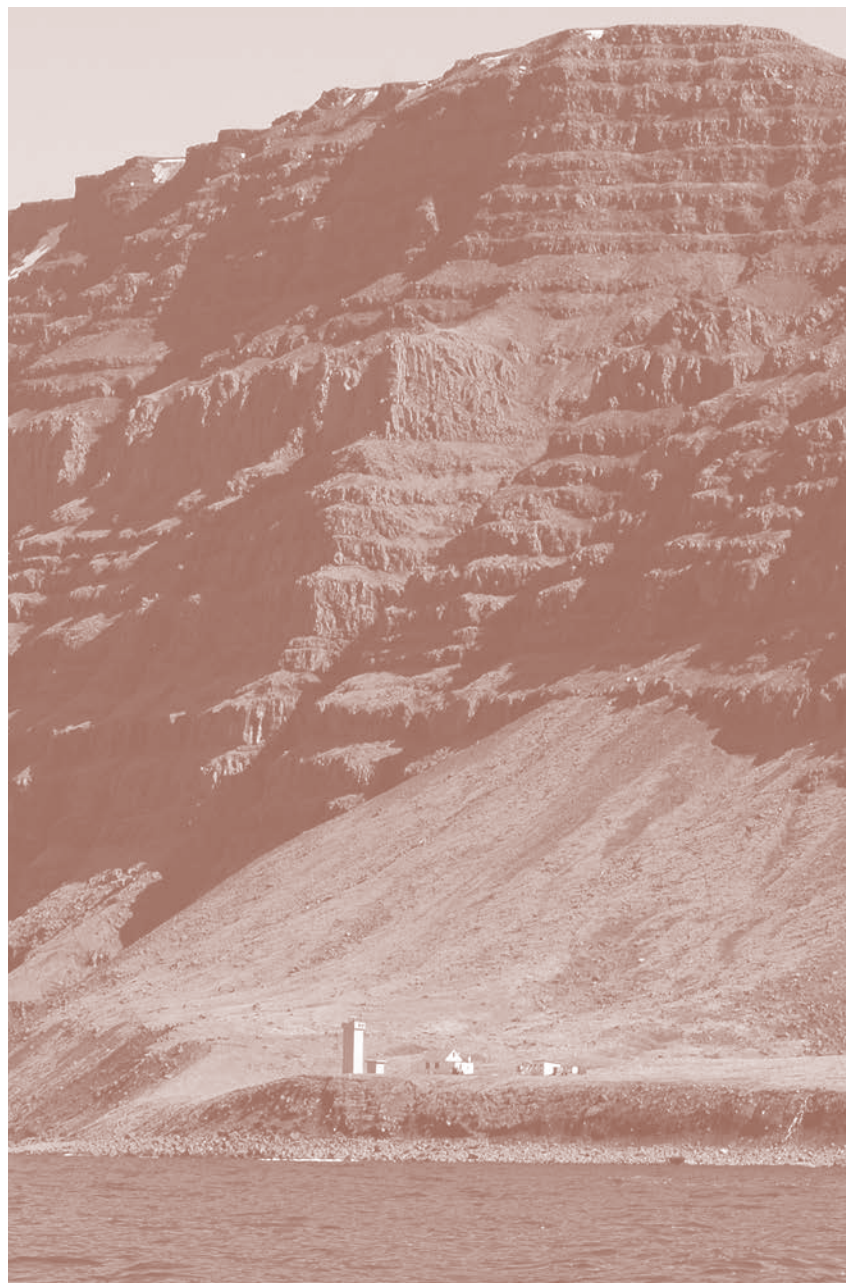
Cities are places of journey, discovery and challenge. They are the modern day forges wherein the values and the moral compass of society are tested and fashioned. The gathering of people from different backgrounds and different lands united in a search to understand the effect and impact of economic recession offered an opportunity to rethink the paradigms of the past. Iceland and Ireland share common roots in the past and common experiences of what happens when regulation fails, imagination is corralled, and greed, rather than giving, dictates actions.

Dublin is a city where people are always on a journey. The creative energy and the sparks of insight that the Northern Lights Observatory nurtures and facilitates contribute to that journey. The support of City Council for this unique International Gathering that fuses Iceland and Ireland in common cause acknowledges the importance of the creative and the innovative in guiding the ongoing journey that Dublin and Dubliners are making daily.

It is my earnest hope that what learning and insights, what questions and dilemmas, what hopes and aspirations, that this gathering produced might prove to be a compass for all our futures. I hope that the publication that reflects the journey made by those who gathered, allows each and everyone of us, to begin or continue our own journey in a way that shapes through action the world in which we live today.

I hope the lighthouse draws you in and keeps you safe on the journey you are making..

Peter Finnegan
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It is a great pleasure and privilege for the Embassy of Iceland and myself to support the ireland:iceland project, founded by the stalwart Irish women Kathy Scott and Mari Kennedy, a project about two islands which have been on a similar trajectory, coming together and going, with the aim to creatively respond to what is going on.

The ireland : iceland project is engaged with contemporary artists and creative thinkers who are orbiting diverse disciplines and practises. Pushing out into new territory, engaging with music, film, spoken word, installation, digital media, performance and found spaces to produce sensorial work that make a provocative and visceral impact. Ireland and Iceland have points of contact in their recent experiences, as well as deep historical ties, that go relatively unmapped. Living on the edge of a brave new world in the midst of crisis/kreppa is the starting point of this collaborative project.

The Northern Lights Observatory held in Ireland in February this year, a series of pop up events, talks, and a public collaboratory at the Dublin City Hall designed to enable an investigation into cultural identity and a creative response to the crisis/kreppa on both islands, lay down foundations for the ireland:iceland project. I was extremely pleased that I could join on the occasion and witness how this truly remarkable initiative of Kathy Scott and Mari Kennedy emerged as a great success as demonstrated by the excellent and most positive media coverage of the event.

I am of the firm view that it is of great mutual benefit that Iceland and Ireland move closer, not at least in view of certain current troubled waters which Kathy Scott and Mari Kennedy, with their dedicated team, have helped to bridge with their impressive endeavours.

Yours faithfully,

Benedikt Jónsson
Ambassador of Iceland